

NATURAL RESOURCES INTERIM COMMITTEE

Treasure Valley Aquifer Working Group

Majority Caucus Room, Capitol - Boise, Idaho

April 20, 2004 - 9:30 a.m.

Committee Members in attendance:

Representative Mike Moyle, Chairman
Senator Brad Little
Senator John Andreason
Representative Darrell Bolz

Committee Members absent:

Representative Lawrence Denney

Others in attendance:

Justin Ruen, Paul Raymond, Steve West, Amy Chestnut, Senator Cecil Ingram, Ray Houston, Maria Minicucci, Barry Burnell, Judy Bartlett, Lynn & Brenda Tominaga, Dan Steenson, Norm Semanko, Gayle Batt, Dick Rush and Paul Castelin

Chairman Moyle opened the meeting with some general comments indicating that the water issue that we are dealing with is a statewide problem and not just a Treasure Valley problem. The Treasure Valley has a stable aquifer, but issues such as increasing population growth and the relicensing of Arrowrock Dam may have an impact on our water.

Christian Petrich, Water Engineering, LLC, presented information concerning the Treasure Valley Aquifer system. His presentation included a discussion on the basic hydrology of the system. He indicated that in general the aquifer is stable, but there are two areas (Southeast of Boise and South of Lake Lowell) which have seen declines in the ground water levels. He stated that there is ample water in the area for the population, but that it is not always available when and where it is needed. Approximately 1,000,000 acre feet of water flow from the valley each year. Approximately 95% of the recharge comes from irrigation water. Inflows come from flood irrigation and seepage while outflows are to the rivers and drainages.

Ground water levels are impacted by the following:

- Population growth
- Changing land use
- Different types of water use patterns as land is converted from agricultural to urban

Currently and for the future population growth (urbanization) and its effects on the quality and quantity of ground water are significant factors for the Treasure Valley Aquifer.

Factors affecting ground water flow: (1) Re-charge/underflow rates; (2) Aquifer material; and (3)

Discharge rates. As the population growth continues land use and water use patterns will continue to be altered. At some point a decision will need to be made regarding continued mining of the aquifer and maintaining the equilibrium.

Water quality issues include contaminants, nitrates, arsenic, radioactivity, iron, and manganese. Information from a testing program done by the Farm Bureau a few years ago is available. This study dealt with nitrate levels in ground water. Water quality is more of an issue at the recharge area than at the withdrawal area.

Flood plains were a topic of discussion. The following statistics were presented for the Boise

River: 10 year flood	7,200 cfs
50 year flood	11,000 cfs
100 year flood	16,600 cfs (all that Lucky Peak can control)
500 year flood	34,800 cfs

Flood plain control is a question of whether it should be statewide or individual city responsibility.

At this time the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) is evaluating conjunctive administration in the Treasure Valley Aquifer. The problem in the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer is more acute currently.

Paul Castelin, IDWR, presented information on ground water issues in the Treasure Valley Aquifer. His presentation was quite brief as he indicated that Mr. Petrich had covered much of what he had to say.

He indicated that additional storage may be needed to mitigate the differences between when water is available and when it is needed. This storage could include both surface and subsurface systems.

Other items he touched on included:

- Endangered Species Act concerns - salmon and steelhead flow requirements
- Ground water recharge associated with urbanization - land use changes
- Water transfers resulting from land use changes - flexibility in water right transfers
- Question of consumptive use changes (agriculture versus urban use)
- Well construction standards - IDWR is currently considering revised well construction standards to protect ground water movement between aquifers.

He also indicated that in the Boise and Meridian area the water is mostly fully appropriated.

The committee then discussed the need to maintain both the quantity and quality of the water in the Treasure Valley Aquifer, potential options, needs and concerns that need to be addressed.

Committee members as well as others in attendance then enumerated issues that could be involved in the process. They included:

- Quality and quantity of water
- Federal government's stand on where water comes from
- Urban use
- Preservation of surface water rights
- Lower Boise River water quality
- ACHD
- ESA impacts (streamlined NEPA process, in-stream flows)
- Public education (particularly urban population) in regards to water use and conservation
- Local entities involvement in the process

Other topics of discussion included:

- Adding on to existing storage
- Aquifer storage versus surface storage
- Reclaiming water
- Injection of water (quality aspects)

Current or completed studies:

- Treasure Valley Hydrologic Project
- Statewide Ground Water Monitoring Project
- Boise Valley Water Use Study (B of R, IDWR)
- Lower Boise River Water Quality Project
- Boise River Valley Management Plan
- USGS

Proposed studies:

- Response Zone Map - IDWR
- Study of effects of urbanization - Dr. Mary McGowan, IDWR

Committee members were requested to submit a listing of at least three priorities in rank order for the Committee to study.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Darrell Bolz
Acting Secretary